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THE CRISPIEST TRIVIA MIX



Gear up with hot car prize

The race is on to grab the last of our fabulous £17k cars in our search for the nation's top trivia lovers.

You can either send us a fact or have a go at our big Number Cruncher below to be automatically entered in a draw for another Honda Civic Type R.

Nobby's crisps come in an array of fun flavours like Chip Shop Salt & Vinegar, Friday Night Balti Chicken, and Straight From The Grill Steak.

And there are five Number Crunchers to crack covering a host of everyday subjects.

Each Number Cruncher has a multiple choice question - simply pick the right answer to give you a figure.

Collect every day's digit, put them in a row of five figures (Mon-Fri), send them to us and we'll enter you into the brilliant competition all thanks to Nobby's Crisps.

Here's a repeat of the week's Number Cruncher questions from our Nobby's Knows column - there's the final Friday question too.

Remember, all you have to do is pick the right sequence of numbers

and send them off to us in order

For a chance to win call us now on 0905 072 3631 with the winning code. You can also text or email us with your answer - competition@dailystar.co.uk with NOBBY'S CAR DRAW as the subject title. Entries must be received by Midnight 27/11/05.

If you want to send us your trivia for another chance to be entered simply text TRIVIA to 88833 or email us at competition@dailystar.co.uk with NEWS FOR NOBBY'S as the subject title.

You can also send us your trivia by following Nobby's link on www.dailysnack.com.



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THE BIG NUMBER CRUNCHER

MONDAY'S QUESTION

How many Queen Elizabeths have sat on the English throne?

A. 1 B. 2 C. 9

TUESDAY'S QUESTION

Complete the film title with the right number: The Magnificent

A. 7 B. 3 C. 9

WEDNESDAY'S QUESTION

If you have sextuplets - how many babies have you got?

A. 1 B. 2 C. 6

THURSDAY'S QUESTION

How many goals did England score in their 1966 World Cup final victory?

A. 4 B. 5 C. 6

FINAL FRIDAY QUESTION

Complete the phrase. Nobby's Crisps are number _ for trivia.

A. 0 B. 1 C. 9

Terms & Conditions: 1. The prize is 1 (one) Honda Civic 2.0 VTEC Type R car; features include standard specification for the above mentioned model, the winner will have a choice of non-metallic colours, subject to availability at the time of booking, 6 months car tax and delivery of the vehicle to the Honda dealer nearest to the winner's home address. 2. The prize cannot be modified and there is no cash alternative in part or in whole. 3. The promotion is open to all residents of the UK aged 18 or over who hold a valid full driving licence, except for employees of the promoter, their families, suppliers, agents or associates. 4. The winner will be chosen at random from the entries received. All winners will be notified by post within 28 days. 5. Usual rules apply. 6. The judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. 7. Winners may be required to participate in publicity. 8. Your prize is valid for 12 months from the date of winning, after which time it is considered expired. Premium rate phone line. Calls cost 75p per minute from a BT landline (Ave Call length 90 secs). Texts should be no longer than 160 characters. Texts cost £1.50 plus your usual operator rate. Winners will be selected from all entries received by midnight 27/11/05. Normal Daily Star rules apply.

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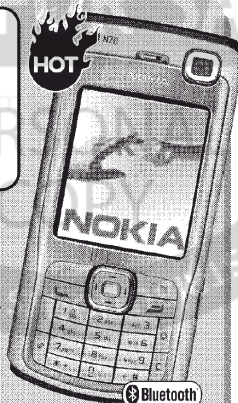
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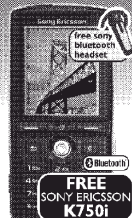
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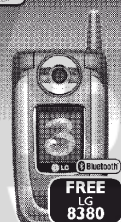
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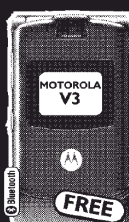
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PUNTER

WHO'S HOT'N NOT

TERRIFIC TRAINERS: (Most wins last 14 days) J Howard Johnson 9; M Pirie 9; P Nicholls 8; Jonjo O'Neill 7; A King 7; N Henderson 5; G L Moore 5; P Hobbs 5; Miss V Williams 4; J Boyle 3; Phillips 3; P Haslam 3; D Shaw 3; George 3; F Murphy 3; N Gifford 2.

SUFFERING STABLES: (Runner since last win) A Dicken 141; W Storey 130; G Chung 67; R Nixon 66; Mactaggart 65; J Haldane 64; Polglase 62; J Mullins 55; Miss Forde 50; D Bridgwater 49; M Young 48.

HOT JOCKS: (Most wins last 14 days)

R Johnson 11; A McCoy 10; G Allen
R Walsh 11; J Murphy 7; E Hamer
J Burt 9; M Hines 8; S McElroy 6;
S Benton 4; Dane O'Neill 4; J
Moore 4; T Evans 4; A Dobbin 4.
HIDEAWAY: 100% (10) by
win P Fitzsimons 138; G Parker
and Dan Williams 74; S Curran 72;
D Warrilow 69; D Warrilow 69;
G Paul Eldery 61; P Buchanan 60;
C Costello 54; K Renwick 53; N Mackie
53; D Sweetney 51; M Halliday 49.

NEW QUARTERS

HORSES having their first runs or new trainers:

MUSSELBURGH: 12/20 Aljumbeo (P)
to R. Brown 12/20; 12/20 Aljumbeo (P)
(A Crook to J Wymies), 3/00 Close
Orders (Mrs J Harrington) (ret) to R Gray
12/20; 12/20 Aljumbeo (P) to R Gray
12/20; 12/20 Aljumbeo (P) to R Gray
Trapenard (F) to N Henderson, 2/00
Bertrand De Belanda (Fr) to P Nicholls
12/20; 12/20 Aljumbeo (P) to R Gray
M Beckett to G Moore, My Immortal
Goodson to M Pipe, Prize Fighter
to M Pipe, 2/00; 12/20 Aljumbeo (P)
Trap (Miss X Challenge) to H Hogarth, 2/00
Global Challenge (Jonjo) to N. L. McKee,
2/00.

WOLVERHAMPTON: 1/01 Anselis Jeo
(I Davy to B Smart), 1/45 Knight Foreve
(I Davy to B Smart), 1/45 Knight Foreve
to A Darcy to D Shaw, Dance Spectacle
to Rogers (ret) to E O'Neill, 2/00.

3.25 Looks Could Kill (G Butler to E Alston), 3.55 Bahamian

PROP IN GLASS

DROP IN CLASS

NEWBURY: 3.15 Ladaklo down 2.

BE TRENDY

Trainer M Pipp won the 1.00 at Newbury in 1996, 97, 98 and 2003.
Trainer N Henderson won the 1.00 at Newbury in 1995, 99 and 2000.
Jockey A McCall won the 1.00 at Newbury in 1997, 2003 and 2004.
Jockey T J Murphy won the 1.00 at Newbury in 1998 and 2001.
Trainer R Nicholls won the 2.40 at Newbury in 1997, 2000, 2001 and 2002.

FAB FOR FAVS

5 favourites have won the 1.00 at Newbury in the last 10 years.
BUT only 1 favourite has won the 12.50, 5.00 and 3.55 at Musselburgh in the last 10 years.
2.50 at Wolverhampton in the last 10 years.

BIGGEST EARNERS

BIGGEST EARNERS

Horse	(time & course)	Distance
Ostfanni	(2.10 Nbu)	285 miles
Dizzy In The Head	(3.55 Wol)	271 miles
Hidden Bounty	(2.10 Nbu)	258 miles
Lascar de Ferbet	(1.20 Mus)	230 miles

Ballycroy Girl	(1.55 Mus)	230 mile
Super Dolphin	(3.00 Mus)	230 mile

Tusk	(1.35 Nbu)	220 mile
Roonah	(2.50 Wol)	203 mile
Grand Deum	(2.35 Mus)	199 mile

HANDICAP BLOT
IL DUCE (2.10 Newbury) races off the same mark as when touched off in a photo on his recent reappearance in a 23-runner handicap at Cheltenham

MUST NEXT TIME
DIAMOND, SAL 2007

DIAMOND SAL score
with plenty in hand a

Carlisle and this expensive-bought mare is one to follow with her stable hitting form now.

ONE TO SWERVE

BAZELLE (1.45 Wolverhampton) boasts the best form in this maiden but has also had plenty of chances.

BEST EACH WAY

THE DARK LORD (2.4)

Newbury) progressed ver
well over hurdles last term an

could spring a surprise bid
to follow up his chas-
ing debut win at Fakenham.

MAGIC COMBINATIONS

G Berridge rides **The Weaver** (12.20)
Rehearsal (2.30) for L Luno, previous
combination 4 wins from 12 mounts 33%
strike rate. G Musker rides **My Best**
A Dobbin rides **Word Gets Around**
(1.20) & **My Best Secret** (3.35) for
Luno, previous combination 11 wins
from 24 mounts 32% strike rate at
Musshelburgh.

R Johnson rides **Green Tang** (1.35) for
H D Day, 3 from 11 27% at Newbury.
J Parnham rides **My Best Secret** (1.35)
Sett (1.35) & **Goblet of Fire** (2.40) for
F Nicholls, 18 from 70 26% at Newbury.
I Mongan rides **Oriental Way** (1.45) for
R Chmings, 4 from 7 57% at
Newbury.

E Ahern rides **Sootyash** (4.25) for J V
Hills, 5 from 95 5% at Wolverhampton.

THE DARK LORD (2.4 Newbury) progressed very well over hurdles last term and

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A Dobbin rides **Word Gets Around**
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Musshelburgh.

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COUNTDOWN TO ENGLAND v SAMOA

CORRY ON

BATTLING

- MARTIN

MARTIN CORRY has demanded his team deliver another epic performance to dispatch Samoa tomorrow.

And the England captain has warned his team against complacency when they face a physical Samoan side that will be desperate to turn over the world champions.

Corry was part of the England squad that faced Samoa in the 2003 World Cup, trailing 16-13 at half-time until they ran out 35-22 winners.

And Corry wants to see a repeat of the ruthless edge they eventually produced, otherwise he knows that life could be tough.

Corry said: "Last season we put in a great performance against South Africa and we said we had to back it up but we didn't. We lost to Australia.

"We put in a big effort last week and we have to show that we can back that up and put in a series of games at the same level.

"The first 20 minutes will be vital. We have to go out there and impose ourselves on the game and then never let up.

"That is the ruthless edge we need to get and we need to maintain. The World Cup match was a huge lesson for us and I'll remind the boys of that.

Order

"If we give Samoa a sniff - and they know they are in with a shout - then they are a very difficult side to play against."

The England No.8 will be linking up with his club-mate Harry Ellis at scrum-half and he is chomping at the bit to get his England career back on track after learning from a 'kick up the a**'.

Ellis was England's first-choice scrum-half in last season's Six Nations championship, only to fall behind Matt Dawson in the pecking order this autumn - something that he wants to put right.

He said: "I'm just so enthusiastic about this game and can't wait to get out there. I've got lots of energy and am raring to go.

"Matt Dawson has been playing better than me for his club and that is why he was selected for the first two games. But the good thing is that people are being picked on form.

"It means I need to up my game and my performance. It was a kick up the a**



A CUT ABOVE: Martin Corry issues a rallying call to his troops yesterday

by DEAN WILSON

and that is what you get after each game when you have a look at the video.

"Samoa are a very physical team, they like hitting hard in the tackle and over there that is what tends to get the biggest cheer.

"I play with a couple of them in the Tuilagi brothers (Anitelea and Alesana).

"They are very good footballers and a powerful nation of rugby players so I make sure they are on my team in training because I know how tough they are!"

JONNY Wilkinson will be out of action for up to a month after a hernia operation yesterday. Newcastle's director of football Rob Andrew said: "We hope to have him back for the Premiership game against Leeds on December 27."

It's the latest injury setback for Wilkinson, who hasn't played for England since he kicked the drop goal that secured the 2003 World Cup.



MORLEY: International aid

Brit aces answer Morley's Oz plea

GREAT BRITAIN's entire front row – one of the few success stories of a disappointing Tri-Nations campaign – could be playing in Australia in 2007.

Prop Adrian Morley, who is about to begin his fifth season with the Sydney Roosters, wants as many leading English players as possible to join him in the gruelling NRL to boost the Lions' international competitiveness.

And there's a fair chance that Lions hooker Keiron Cunningham and front-rower Stuart Fielden, who were Britain's best players in the series, will take him up on his plea.

Cunningham has asked top Aussie agent David Riolo to find him an NRL club and Fielden has been targeted by the Gold Coast Titans, who enter the competition in 2007.

Titans chief executive Michael Searle and coach-elect John Cartwright are in England for Saturday's final and are also using their trip to recruit new players.

They are thought to have held preliminary talks with Bradford star



Fielden, having already signed up Lions vice-captain Brian Carney.

Fielden is single and would relish the lifestyle on the Gold Coast and he has long held ambitions to test himself in the toughest competition in the world.

The Titans are also lining up moves for two of Britain's brightest young stars – Leeds full-back Richard Mathers and Wigan loose forward Sean O'Loughlin.

CASTLEFORD are not exactly setting an example in a week when there have been calls to limit the number of overseas players to bolster Great Britain's future hopes.

The Tigers have already signed up Tongan forward Willie Manu and Penrith centre Luke Dyer – both non-quota players – to go with Aussie captures Danny Nutley and Adam Dykes.

They could be joined by two Samoans and possibly ex-Sydney Roosters forward Luke Ricketson – who has an Irish passport – to underline why the present system is a farce. Next year's limit of three overseas players per club can be sidestepped far too easily.

NEW LEIGH coach Tony Benson has made former London Broncos and Huddersfield Giants winger Lee Greenwood his 13th signing.

IT looks like the neutrals are backing Saturday's Tri-Nations final, even though Great Britain are not there.

More than 25,000 tickets have been sold for the Eiland Road decider between Australia and New Zealand.

SECOND TEST: England plan rescue act despite flop

DRAW BLIMEY FOR VAUGHAN

CAPTAIN'S AGONY: Vaughan after his dismissal and (inset) Strauss, who is now flying home for the birth of his child, goes for a duck



SCOREBOARD

Overnight: England 446, Pakistan 462 and 183-6 (Salman Butt 50).	
Pakistan Second Innings Cont	
Inzamam-ul-Haq not out	100
ul-Hasan c G O Jones b Harmison	1
Akhtar c G O Jones b Hoggard	14
Sami Ily b Hoggard	5
Kanerla not out	2
Extras b4 b5 w2 nb0	15
Total 9 wickets dec (83.1 overs)	269
Fall: 1-54 2-104 3-108 4-164 5-164 6-183 7-167 8-234 9-244	
Bowling: Hoggard 16-1-50-3, Flintoff 27-1-2-66-3, Harmison 19-2-61-2, Gilles 17-3-51-0, Udal 14-2-31-1.	
England Second Innings	
Trescothick b Shoaib Akhtar	0
Strauss b Naved-ul-Hasan	0
Vaughan lbw b Naved-ul-Hasan	9
Bell c Kamran Akmal b Shoaib Akhtar	0
Pietersen c Sub b Naved-ul-Hasan	42
Flintoff c Sub b Shoaib Akhtar	56
Jones not out	30
Giles not out	13
Extras b4 b5 nb2	14
Total 6 wickets (48 overs)	164
Fall: 1-1 2-5 3-10 4-20 5-100 6-138	
Bowling: Akhtar 11-0-61-3, ul-Hasan 12-3-30-3, Sami 6-1-18-0, Kanerla 12-4-27-0, Afridi 7-2-16-0.	

MICHAEL VAUGHAN didn't know whether to laugh or cry as England's hopes of a seventh-successive series win were ground into the dust yesterday.

For the disappointment of not levelling the series was overshadowed by massive relief that they didn't lose after England crashed to 20-4 – with Marcus Trescothick, Andrew Strauss and Ian Bell all out for ducks.

And after being set a mission impossible 285 to win off 64 overs, Vaughan himself could make just nine.

But Andrew Flintoff and Kevin Pietersen stopped the rot before Geraint Jones and Ashley Giles brought the team over the line in fading light on a shaky 164-6.

The first pair came together at 20-4 with Pietersen going straight on the counter-attack, only to fall just before the end of the second session for 42 when a bat-pad connection saw him loop a catch to short mid-wicket off Rana Naved-ul-Hasan.

from RODNEY WHITE in Faisalabad

a lot of pressure with that new ball and bowled very, very well.

"We had to take early wickets – and most importantly Inzamam's wicket."

"We thought we had a couple of decent shouts against him last night, but he played so well and probably was the difference between the sides."

"We knew we had to get them out in the first 15 overs – but once that had gone we tried to delay the declaration so that we would have to bat the fewest number of overs we possibly could."

England's batting looked a mess early on with former Mr Reliable Trescothick losing his off-stump, playing no shot to the pace and swing of Shoaib in the one over before lunch.

Hint

Strauss could do no better going back when he should have been forward to a Rana delivery which kept low and nicked into his stumps.

First-innings century maker Bell was caught behind off Shoaib, then Vaughan himself went lbw to Rana.

But coach Duncan Fletcher also hinted at bowling changes in Lahore for the Third Test saying: "These wickets looked like two spinners' wickets but we might have to go with one spinner and add a seamer to our attack because they seem to be doing a lot of the work and getting the wickets."

Job

Flintoff then completed a precious 88-ball half-century shortly after tea.

But he too could not quite see the job through, holing out to gully for 56 trying to pull Shoaib Akhtar, which left Jones and Giles to defy Pakistan's last surge.

England now need to win in Lahore next week to square the series but will be without Strauss, who is returning to England for the birth of his first child.

Vaughan said: "It is a blow but we still have a chance of drawing this series. When you come to this part of the world a draw isn't a disaster."

England's first major problem was Vaughan's opposite number Inzamam-ul-Haq, who battered his second century of the match, finishing on 100 not out as Pakistan declared at 268-9.

And, while Vaughan knew that reaching their target was never on, he had not counted on losing three of his top four batsmen for ducks as Rana (3-30) and Shoaib (3-61) came rampaging in with the new ball.

Vaughan added: "When you are 20 for four to get out with a draw you are happy. They put us under

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THROUGH THE VICTOR CHANDLER GROUP

NEW DAILY GAMING COLUMN

YOUR BIGGEST MISTAKE?

What's the biggest mistake most new online poker players make? Simple! They play too many hands. How many times have you decided to take your distinctly mediocre hole cards through to the flop in the hope that you'll snare a high pair or even three of a kind? Hope is like charity. If you need either, you're already in trouble. There's actually a mathematical reason why this kind of behaviour will lose you money: it's against the odds!

ODDS CALCULATORS

We've touched on odds calculators before and we asked for feedback to dailystarpoker.com from players who've used them. There seems to be a majority in favour and here's why. Using mental arithmetic to try and calculate the odds of a hand being successful is not easy for most people. If you're playing online, using an odds calculator to give you feedback instantly on the value of your hand, can be quite a boon to a serious competitor. An odds calculator will tell you the relative strength of your hand as a percentage and tell you the 'Sklansky Starting Hand Group' that it falls into.

Using the 'Sklansky' valuation system, pocket Aces at a table of ten players would be in Sklansky Group 1 and be valued at 100% whereas a pair of Two's would only make Group 7 and have a hand ranking a little over 60%. These figures apply for hands reaching the river.

BEYOND THE OBVIOUS

Clearly, no poker player needs telling that pocket rockets is a 100% start to a hand but let's say you had to quickly evaluate the relative values of say Ace of Spades and Queen of Hearts as hole cards against Queen and Nine of Diamonds. We're betting most new players' instant reaction would be that the Ace-Queen would be the better hand. The odds calculator will tell you right away that Queen-Nine same suited is superior.

HELPS POSITIONAL PLAY

Position in Texas Hold'em is all important. If you're in a good position you want to play more hands. If you're in a bad position you want to play less hands. The calculator allows you to adjust your starting hand settings in relation to where you're seated.

Obviously, playing from the button is the best position in Hold'em. If you're on the button the calculator will automatically set your hand rank requirement to 50%. If you pick up a hand ranked lower than 50% the calculator will suggest that you fold. If you're 'under the gun' as the player to the left of the big blind (the worst position) your hand rank requirement will go to 85%. Know your odds.

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BIG-FIGHT COUNTDOWN: Carlos' call I'LL RICK YOU TO SHREDS!



I'M READY TO RUMBLE: Ricky Hatton squares up to Carlos Maussa yesterday

Maussa's new blast at Hatton

by KEVIN FRANCIS

RUGGED Colombian Carlos Maussa says he will rip Ricky Hatton's dreams to shreds when the pair meet in their unification showdown clash tomorrow.

WBA world light-welterweight champion Maussa challenges IBF king Hatton at the Sheffield Arena - and he is promising to take full advantage of Hatton's notoriously suspect eyes.

Maussa declared: "I will be aiming to cut those eyes of his and bring about a stoppage."

"I know all about the fact that Hatton has had problems over the years with cuts around his eyes and he will never have come up against anyone who throws as many punches as I do."

"I can't see it going the distance. I will finish the fight early and take the IBF belt away from Hatton because I am not just over here for the money."

Maussa, 34, won his belt with a shock seventh-round victory over Vivian Harris in Atlantic City in June and simply can't wait to add Hatton to his list of conquests.

Ready

He said of the Mancunian, who has a perfect record of 39 straight wins: "I have wanted to fight Ricky for a number of years but I was never given the opportunity. Now it has come along and I am more ready than ever for it."

"It doesn't bother me to be the underdog. I am fighting in Hatton's country but that does not affect me at all, even though I know the home crowd will be right behind him."

Both fighters agree that it is a potentially explosive confrontation.

And Hatton said: "This will be a real thrill for the fans - they will be the winners. There will be fireworks, that's for sure. It will be a rough and tumble affair."

Maussa added: "I can see us being involved in a real tussle. We are both very attacking and that should make for a great spectacle."

Hatton's trainer Billy Graham said: "This fight certainly won't be for the squeamish, it will be explosive and I can't see it going the distance. 'Whoever wins will be the genuine light-welterweight champion.'"

Hatton, 27, looks in fantastic shape with Graham adding: "I keep saying he is approaching his peak but he still keeps getting better and better."

"He has every punch in the book in his armoury but, as he has got older, he has got better with the kind of experience that will certainly count."

SPORTWORD

- ACROSS**
- Kim, gymnastics Olympic champion in 1976 and 1980 (5)
 - Becker, Wimbledon men's singles champion on three occasions (5)
 - Tony won snooker's world doubles title with Steve Davis (3)
 - Jason speedway world champion in 2004 (5)
 - Mike Cardiff, Bedford and Wales rugby full back (5)
 - Sebastian motor rally driver (4)
 - Rhyme N Grand National winner in 1988 (6)
 - Tony WHU, Everton, Leicester City and England striker (6)
 - Mark Bolton, Charlton Athletic and South Africa defender (4)
 - The nickname of Morton FC (3)
 - Comaneci, gymnastics Olympic champion in 1976 and 1980 (5)
 - See 18 across
- DOWN**
- Peter top British squash player (5)
 - Robert, Portsmouth and France forward (7)
 - The Red nickname of Lincoln City (4)
 - Australia captain who played for Essex (6)
 - Reardon, snooker world champion on six occasions (3)
 - Bruny male Canadian sprinter (5)
 - Leicester City, Nottingham Forest and England goalkeeper (7)
 - Sport sometimes known as jai-alai (6)
 - Northampton and England wing three-quarter (5)
 - Arsenal and France striker (5)
 - Eoin former Eire football manager (4)
 - Burrough Hill Cheltenham Gold Cup winner in 1984 (3)

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SERIOUSLY football

UEFA CUP: Steve's gritty Boro go through

Big Sam playing Vaztasy football

from GEORGE SCOTT
Guimaraes 1 Bolton 1

RICARDO VAZ TE'S stunning first-touch strike saved Bolton from UEFA Cup humiliation last night.

The Portuguese striker had only been on the pitch for 60 seconds after replacing Jay-Jay Okocha.

But he made an immediate impact in a breakaway move, stretching to fire in a curling effort which gave Vitoria Guimaraes keeper Marcio Paiva no chance.

Just three minutes earlier Guimaraes striker Marek Saganowski's 85th-minute header had stunned Sam Allardyce's side.

Saganowski's goal looked to have put Bolton's place in the last 32 in doubt but 19-year-old Vaz Te's equaliser keeps Wanderers on course for the knock-out stages.

There was a moment of danger for Sam Allardyce's side early on after Dario Monteiro burst through the middle.

Goalkeeper Jussi Jaaskelainen got down quickly to smother the shot to Bolton's relief.

Poor

The home side was playing with authority despite lying second bottom of the Portuguese league.

Jaaskelainen got down quickly to smother a shot from Saganowski in the 12th minute after he had found space on the edge of the area.

Then Bruno N'Gotty launched a free-kick into the area but Stelios got a poor first touch.

Bolton were finding it difficult to get any rhythm going in the early stages, perhaps because this was their first game in 17 days.

They found themselves on the back foot again in the 22nd minute when Saganowski tested Jaaskelainen with a well-struck effort.

Bolton almost took the lead in the 32nd minute when Abdoulaye Faye flicked on a long throw found Okocha.

Kevin Nolan, with seven goals to his credit, got away from his marker, but his close-range effort went wide of the post.

There was precious little entertainment for both sets of supporters for much of the second half until the frantic last five minutes.

And when Saganowski scored it looked like being a bleak journey home for Bolton.

But Vaz Te's bit of brilliance had Allardyce jumping with joy on the touchline.

GUIMARAES: Paiva, Mario Sergio, Dragone, Cleber, Rogerio Matias, Svard, Flavio Meireles, Benachour, Neca (Sergio 82), Dario (Targino 61), Saganowski.
BOLTON: Jaaskelainen, O'Brien, Ben Haim, N'Gotty, Gardner, Nakata (Speed 59), Faye, Okocha (Vaz Te 87), Nolan, Borgetti (Diout 64), Giannakopoulos.
Ref: Laurent Duhamel (France)

McCLAREN MAAR-CHIES PAST DUTCH



from IAN MURTAGH in Alkmaar

AZ Alkmaar.....0 Boro.....0

STEVE McCLAREN'S Middlesbrough mean-machine marched into the UEFA Cup knock-out stages with a steely display that underlined their fast-developing European pedigree.

Boro have now gone seven and a half hours without conceding a goal at this level and last night, at Alkmaarderhout, they quelled the fire of Holland's most prolific side.

Louis van Gaal's free-scoring AZ Alkmaar are averaging almost three goals-a-game this term and have already rattled up seven and five goal thrashings at home.

In a frantic finale, last year's semi-finalists had chances to overhaul Boro at the top of Group D - but there was never any chance of another goal-fest against such resilient opponents.

Chance

Sub Martijn Meerdink fired over from close range on 69 minutes, then Barry van Galen scuffed his shot with the goal gaping 10 minutes later.

And when Brad Jones bravely foiled Danny Koevermans on 86 minutes, Boro had survived their toughest test yet - and guaranteed at least a top three finish.

There may not have been a goal for Alkmaar discard Jimmy-Floyd Hasselbaink to mark 12 years since he was kicked out of the club but McClaren was pleased with what he saw.

"We came here to do a job and we've done that by qualifying for the next stage," he said.

"To keep a clean sheet against such a free-scoring side is very satisfying.

"That's five clean sheets in Europe this season and we're proving a tough nut to crack. Now we want to win our last game and finish top of the group to ensure a favourable draw."

Alkmaar had a Tarok Sektioui goal incorrectly disallowed early on and McClaren added: "We had a bit of luck with that but all in all, my team defended superbly throughout."

Despite a sodden pitch and driving rain, both teams produced enterprising football with AZ carving out the clearer chances.

Jones, deputising for the injured Mark Schwarzer,

TEAMS

AZ ALKMAAR: Timmer, Steinsson, Jaliens, Mathijssen, de Cler, Schaars, Landzaat, van Galen, Sektioui (Meerdink 60), Arveladze (Koevermans 77), Perez, BORO: Jones, Bates, Ehlogu, Riggott, Pogatzet, Morrison (Parnaby 63), Boateng, Doriva, Nemeth (Quadrue 73), Hasselbaink, Viduka (Yakubu 63).
Referee: Gianluca Paparesta (Italy).

was Boro's saviour time and again as Alkmaar launched a string of attacks.

But Boro - who started with in-form Yakubu and captain Gareth Southgate on the bench - were also positive as they surged forward at every opportunity.

Fiery

Mark Viduka, who had scored twice in the previous European tie against Dnipro, stung Henk Timmer's hands with an early snapshot and dragged a left-foot drive wide.

Hasselbaink, who was handed the captaincy, was booked for dissent when the striker delayed an opposition free-kick.

And Emmanuel Pogatzet, who'd broken his nose at the weekend, followed him into the referee's notebook for clattering Kew Jaliens along with George Boateng, whose crunching tackle on Greta Steinsson looked legitimate.

Steinsson was lucky to escape with a caution when he exacted revenge 15 minutes later, with Boateng needing lengthy treatment.

Alkmaar threw everything at Boro late on but with Chris Riggott and Ehlogu standing firm, the visitors secured the point which ensures UEFA Cup action in 2006.

Information Station

FOOTBALL

UEFA Cup Group D										
AZ (0)	0	Middlesbro (0)	0							
		Alt: 8,461								
Dnipro (0)	0	Litke Lovetch (0)	2							
		Nazarenko 90,gg								
		Alt: 3,000								
		Sent off: A Radchenko (Dnipro) 82								
Group H										
Guimaraes (0)	1	Bolton (0)	1							
		Vaz Te 68								
Saganowski 85		Alt: 17,000								
Z St Petersburg (1)	2	Sevilla (0)	1							
		Puerta 90								
Karaiskaki 11, 68										
Group I										
		P W D L F A Pts								
Middlesbro	3	2	0	1	4	0	7			
Litke Lovetch	2	2	0	0	4	1	6			
AZ	2	1	0	2	1	4	5			
Grasshoppers	2	0	2	1	3	0	4			
Dnipro	3	0	3	1	7	0	6			

Group H										
Guimaraes (0)	1	Bolton (0)	1							
		Vaz Te 68								
Saganowski 85		Alt: 17,000								
Z St Petersburg (1)	2	Sevilla (0)	1							
		Puerta 90								
Karaiskaki 11, 68										
Group I										
		P W D L F A Pts								
Z St Petersburg	3	2	0	1	4	3	6			
Bolton	3	1	2	0	3	2	5			
Sevilla	2	1	0	1	4	2	3			
Guimaraes	2	0	1	1	2	3	1			
Besiktas	2	0	1	1	1	4	1			
Group A: Monaco L, Hamburg L, Viking FK 2 St. Pauli 2.										
Group C: Halmstad BK 1, Sampdoria 3, Hertha Berlin 0 Lens 0.										
Group E: Roma 1, Strasbourg 1, Tromso 3, Crvena Zvezda 1.										
Group F: CSKA Moscow 2, Levski Sofia 1, Marseille L, Herenweien L.										
Group G: PAOK Salonika 1, VfB Stuttgart 2, Shakhtar Donetsk 0 Rapid Bucuresti 1.										

GOLF

PGA Grand Slam of Golf (Poupu Bay GC)—Final Rd (USA unless stated, par 72): 131 T Woods 67 64 138 P Mickelson 70 68 143 M Campbell (NZ) 73 70 144 V Singh (FI) 75 69.

European Volvo China Open (Shenzhen Golf Club, China)—1st Rd (Gbr & Ir unless stated, Par 72): 65 C Piaphol (Tha), F Delamontagne (Fra), 67 B Lane, B Ruangkit (Tha). Also: 68 S Yates, M Tunnick, O Wilson, A Butterfield, 69 Peter Lawrie, D Park, R Fisher, 70 K Ferrie, 71 A Wall, P Casey, S Little, S Dodd, G Murphy, P Gilding, M Warren, M McGee.

TODAY'S DIARY

FOOTBALL
Victory Shield
Scotland U16 v England U16 (7.30)
The Welsh Premier: Caersws v New City Druids (7.30), Carmarthen v Aberystwyth (7.30), Connah's Quay v Airbus UK (7.30).
Irish Lge—Prem: Armagh City v Dungannon Swifts (7.45).
Eircom Lge Promotion/Relegation Final Second Leg: Dublin City v Shamrock (8.05).

BASKETBALL

BBL: Newcastle v Brighton, Milton Keynes v Scottish Rocks.

CRICKET

Fourth One Day International: India v South Africa (Kolkata).
Third Test Match—day 1 of 5: Australia v West Indies (Adelaide).

GOLF

European Volvo China Open (Shenzhen Golf Club, China).
Nelson Mandela Invitational (Arabia) Country Estate, near Hermans.

Merrill Lynch Skins Game (Trilogy GC at La Quinta, La Quinta, Calif).

RUGBY UNION

Kick-off at 7.45pm unless stated

Guinness Premiership
Bath v Leeds.
Leicester v London Irish.
Principality Building Society Premiership (7pm) Aberystwyth v Bridgend at Bridgend, Bedwas v Cardiff, Ebbw Vale v Cross Keys, Maesteg v Neath, Newport v Pontypool, Pontypool v Glamorgan Wanderers, Swansea v Llanvory.

YESTERDAY'S SPORTWORD
ACROSS: 1 Pilgrims, 7 Rings, 8 Laine, 9 Foster, 10 Said, 12 Ickx, 14 Norman, 17 Harte, 18 Emlin, 16 Keke.

FIVE FOR FUN ANSWERS
1 Marcus Trescothick, 2 Michael Oakes (father Alan), 3 Kenny Dalglis, 4 Royal Troon, 5 New Zealand.

5 FOR FUN

- Who captained England in the first Test of the current series against Pakistan?
- Name the current Wolves goalkeeper whose father played over 600 games for Manchester City as an out-field player?
- Who in 1986 was the first player/manager to win the FA Cup?
- At which golf course on the Open rota, would you find a famous par three hole called "The Postage Stamp"?
- Which cricket country are sometimes called Black Caps?

ANSWERS: See above

TXT MANIACS

Text Dssport followed by a space, then your name and comment, and send to 61616. Texts cost 25p plus your normal mobile operator cost.

TEXT DSSPORT TO 61616

☐ Robson get keano he is still best midfielder in premiership by a mile. Gav dudley baggie

☐ Jackster who r u sidin with this yr if u make it we'll show u how many we get u sad jack ****. ccafc trev

☐ 2 gooner, yawn 'chelsea bought title' tinkerman provd u cant buy title U still nd grt manager n team spirit Look up jealousy penny mite drop. MeadskiCFC

☐ Keane 4 m c f c we dont want da scums O.A.P's day tink e is past it so why wud we want im + alfie h wont b 2 apy c o m stadium is no grave yard. city till i die

☐ F*** me Jackster i did n't realise there were 3 teams in wales you've been S*** for that many years i thought you'd given up! Young Kishaw Wrexham F.C.

☐ I will sue Charlton for discrimination if they try and ban all honest united fans from their ground due to the actions of 1 idiot. Danny MUPC

☐ To jan belfast? so man u r in free fall r they? how can a club with rooney and ronaldo to of the best young players around be in free fall? we bin around for 120 years so i dont think so! oh and beck-ham was so gud against barca the other night ur a muppet! red army/nanc

☐ Wen we get wright, mcartney, arca etc bk we'll be out 2 prove a point... wba done it last season we can do it, keep the faith sunderland fans! COL C SAFC

☐ Sunderland afc -- HA HA WAT A JOKE. Tom Toon

☐ To daveban newcastle are a joke ftm newcastle scum. Safe 4 eva. beigy safe

☐ HOW COME A SO CALLED BIG TEAM LEEDS COULD NOT FILL THERE GROUND AGAINST YORKSHIRES NUMBER 1 THE BLADES WHAT RUBBISH SUPPORT U HAVE, CATCH US IF U CAN UP THE BLADES. BIG T

☐ Heaven help England shud McClaren get the job aft even HE is why England play players out of position-same as boro. He's 2loyal snakes instead of form players-crap manager. NED STOCKTON

☐ UTD win one game & they all text in. CHELSEA lose and no sign of thier fans. What S*** fans. lady boys the lot of em. LFC. Never walk alone. RedRascal

☐ Norwich goin down. there all a bunch inbreds cum on della les b avin ya! ifc still da pride of east anglia! Tractor stu

☐ McAnuff good enough? Ha Ha. Burge CPFC

☐ To dragon lfc yes we will see your sorry little red a****s in december do us a favour till then shut ya mouth. 5 times get over it. chris efc

☐ Why do kopites think their opinion matters an they are always right no one cares about you so give it a rest, you hurt my ears an your boring. EFC JEDI

☐ To gretna goddess theres only 1 team in scotland up the berwick. rick

IT'S A DANNY OLD GAME

Read Chief Football Writer Danny

Fullbrook every Friday

Keano was spot-on... Fergie has blown it

WORDS OF WISDOM: Roy Keane told the truth but that led to his departure

ROY KEANE was right – Sir Alex Ferguson IS losing his grip.

The only problem is the person who dared to point that out to the Manchester United boss has been booted out of the club.

Fergie has been losing control on the pitch in the last three years and, with Vodafone ending their shirt sponsorship, the same is happening off it.

If fans thought a crisis was just around the corner after Keane's exit, it is now looking them full in the face.

Downhill

United are standing on a precipice, looking dangerously like they might fall over the edge. And most of that can be traced back to Ferguson.

Ever since his battle with John Magnier over racehorse Rock of Gibraltar, United have been going downhill.

Keane bravely mentioned this, and fell foul of Fergie's wrath.

But the danger was the Irish midfielder's remarks were too close to the bone, as were his comments about so many of the current crop of United stars not being good enough – AND that Carlos

Quieroz should never have been allowed to return. So many people have said Fergie had no choice to get rid of Keane after he had destabilised the club, and the best way to be was ruthless.

The same should have happened three years ago, though, when Fergie changed his mind about retiring.

It was obvious the legendary Scot had reached the end of the road, and the mess United are now in is a consequence of that.

If United's board had been as brave as Fergie was and got rid of their controversial boss, the club may have started winning titles again, and the Glaziers may never have stepped foot into Old Trafford.

Now look at the club. They are not only under threat by Chelsea on the pitch, it is happening off it.

Jose Mourinho's side are set to win back-to-back titles, something only United have done in the Premiership era.

While Vodafone have been busy cancelling the final two years of their four-year deal, worth £18m, Chelsea have landed a five-year contract with Samsung worth £55m, a Premiership record.

Peter Kenyon must have been rolling around his Stamford Bridge office in stitches yesterday as he looked on at what was once a great club.

Chelsea's now chief executive was the man who put that United deal together, before changing jobs.

He is aiming to make Chelsea the biggest brand and club in world football ahead of a United who look in terminal decline.

Vodafone walking out on United is the biggest kick in the teeth the club could have received.

Spent

OK, so they are expanding into sponsorship of the Champions League, but they could have seen out their deal with the deposed champions, and did not think it was worth it.

If United had been top of the league by 10 points and through to the latter stages of the European Cup, do you think they would still be pulling out? No way.

But such decisions come



IS Danny right about Jose Mourinho? Let him know your views. Text DSDANNY followed by a space then your views to 61616. Texts cost 25p plus normal operator rate. Or send him an e-mail to danny.fullbrook@dailystar.co.uk

down to results, and that is the manager's responsibility. Since 1999 United have come nowhere near repeating their European Cup triumph as Fergie has spent more than £250m rebuilding the team.

He has failed to replace his golden generation of David Beckham, Paul Scholes, Ryan Giggs, Nicky Butt and the Neville brothers. His midfield buys, the likes of Juan Sebastian Veron, Eric Djemba Djemba, Kleberson and Liam Miller, have all been a waste of money.

Fergie has failed to take

the club forward, especially in Europe. And if they do not beat Benfica in their last group game they will face the humiliation of not making the last 16, which will cost the club £15m.

No wonder Keane was so eager to jump ship. He was not a man who slips quietly below the surface.

Fergie's days at United are over. And a 3-1 win against an out-of-form Charlton last weekend just papered over the cracks.

He can no longer inspire his team, which equally is no longer good enough. If he could, then they would

have responded on Tuesday against Villarreal, especially with the Spaniards missing three key players.

It is now time for Fergie to show some class. If United fail on December 7 against Benfica in Lisbon, he should do the decent thing and quit, giving United a chance to start again.

If it all goes wrong, and he doesn't, beware Real Madrid coming knocking next summer for United's crown jewel Wayne Rooney.

Money

Because, believe me, with a £500m debt to service by then, the Glaziers may need the Spanish club's money.

☐ JUST a few words for the Pompey fans who roundly abused me when I criticised Milan Mandaric for getting rid of Harry Redknapp. I told you so.

It was the worst thing the Pompey owner could have done, and nothing has made me change my mind.

I wish the club good luck, but they would have been better off with Redknapp and Jim Smith. But they were too popular for Mandaric's liking.



HE'S TO BLAME: Fergie is under fire for failing to stop the rot



REAL ASSET: Rooney will be a target for Madrid

SOCCER SHOTS

■ **WOLVES** boss Glenn Hoddle failed in a cheeky bid to sign Kevin Campbell on loan from local rivals West Brom.

■ **FULHAM** are chasing Russian-born Finland international midfielder Alexei Eremenko, 22, from Italian side Lecce.

■ **LEEDS** want the rising star of the Conference, Stevenage's 20-year-old midfielder George Boyd.

■ **SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY** manager Paul Sturrock has signed a striker at the sixth time of asking after landing Sunderland's Daryl Murphy on a two-month loan deal.

■ **MILLWALL** have signed Liverpool defender Zak Whitbread, 21, and Birmingham keeper Colin Doyle on loan until January.

■ **SCUNTHORPE** have signed midfielder Neil MacKenzie, 29, from struggling Macclesfield until the end of the year.

■ **LUTON**'S Slovenian goalkeeper Dino Seremet, 25, has joined Doncaster in a one-month loan deal.

■ **LEICESTER** winger Jason Wilcox, 34, has signed for Blackpool on a month's loan.

■ **SHEFFIELD UNITED** have shelved contract talks with Steve Kabba after the striker rejected the club's latest £6,000-a-week offer.

■ **READING** have signed Brentford defender Michael Dobson, 24, on loan until the end of January.

■ **SOUTHAMPTON** have signed Blackburn goalkeeper Zac Jones, 17, on a three-month loan deal.

■ **PLYMOUTH** have signed midfielder Jason Jarrett, 26, on loan from Norwich for a month.

■ **MIDDLESBROUGH** striker Danny Graham has joined Derby on a month's loan.

■ **SWINDON** have signed West Ham's Czech Republic U21 international Petr Mikolanda, 21, on a month's loan.

■ **COVENTRY** have signed former Liverpool and West Ham midfielder Don Hutchison, 34, on a short-term deal after he walked out on Millwall.

■ **SUN JIHAI**, 28, has called on Stuart Pearce to hand him a new long-term contract at Manchester City. The China international is out of contract at the end of the season.

■ **KEVIN PHILLIPS** has shaken off a calf strain in time to lead the Aston Villa attack against Charlton tomorrow.

■ **WALSALL'S** Darren Wrack, 29, has been ruled out for the rest of the season after suffering a setback in his recovery from a broken leg.

■ **KEN BATES** wants to honour Leeds legend Billy Bremner by building a pub inside Elland Road and naming it after him.

■ **JOHN FILAN** has been told he will keep his place in the Wigan team to face Spurs tomorrow despite his blunder against Arsenal.

SERIOUSLY football

Anton vows to play alongside Rio for England

BROTHERS IN ARMS



■ by PETER WHITE

HARRY REDKNAPP last night predicted the Ferdinand brothers will one day line up side-by-side in the England team.

Manchester United's Rio, 27, is already a regular for his country and Anton, 20, is starting to earn rave reviews at West Ham in his debut Premiership season.

The pair clash for the first time at Upton Park on Sunday and Southampton boss Redknapp will be there to watch the two players who came through his former Academy at West Ham.

Redknapp said: "I will be delighted the day Rio and Anton stand alongside each other at the heart of England's defence - it will happen, no doubt about it."

"Anton has terrific pace and is comfortable on the ball, just like Rio."

"I have no doubts at all that he has the class to go on and win international honours."

And Anton himself - also has his eyes on joining Rio in the full squad.

The West Ham defender said: "It would be a dream come true for the whole family. I'm ambitious and I want to play at the highest level, which means England. I won't rest until I've done that."

"I'm playing for the U21s at the moment and the next step is the seniors, so it isn't too far away."

But Anton's biggest problem is the formidable list of centre-halves standing in his way. As well as Rio, there is Sol Campbell, John Terry,

Jonathan Woodgate, Ledley King and Jamie Carragher all bidding for a game into the centre of England's defence.

Wall

But Redknapp believes he has the class to do it. He said: "I don't think anyone doubted Rio would make it right to the top."

"Anton showed similar talent at the start but then he seemed to hit a bit of a brick wall. He had a little spell when he

outgrew his strength and got a bit leggy. He didn't develop as quickly as Rio, who was firmly established in West Ham's first team by the time he was 17."

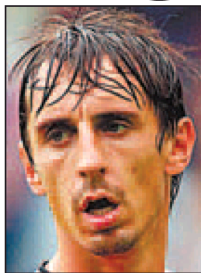
"After I had left Upton Park one or two people who were keeping a close eye on him rang me and told me that his career had come to a standstill."

"However, full marks to Anton who stuck at it. It is always more difficult to follow in big brother's footsteps."

■ **UP THE ANTE:** Anton Ferdinand wants to become an England regular like his brother Rio

■ **FAMILY AFFAIR:** Rio faces his brother Anton for the first time on the pitch on Sunday

Fergie clocks end of his reign



NEVILLE: Wants action

SIR ALEX FERGUSON has set the clock ticking on his reign as Manchester United boss by admitting: "I don't have a long time left."

Ferguson is facing his most crucial game in 15 years when United battle for Champions League survival against Benfica in Lisbon next month.

The 63-year-old, on a one-year rolling contract, has watched Arsenal and Chelsea overtake United in recent seasons.

He insists hopes of clinching more trophies will have to be fulfilled at United - because he will not be taking another job.

Ferguson said: "I don't have a

■ by MARK OGDEN

long time left but I still have some time left I hope!

"When I complete my service, I will retire and I will deserve it."

"I'm finished once I leave Manchester United."

Meanwhile, Gary Neville admits he may be forced to wait until next week's Carling Cup clash with West Brom to boost his United comeback.

Neville, 30, ended 10 weeks on the sidelines with a substitute appearance in the Champions League stalemate against Villarreal on Tuesday.

The England defender, who has

now overcome a groin injury, also made a 70 minute appearance in a reserve game against Manchester City which United won 4-2 on Wednesday.

Matches

Neville is now eyeing a start against West Brom after admitting Sunday's Premiership trip to West Ham may be too much, too soon for him.

He said: "Whatever happens at the weekend, I am definitely looking to get a game next week against West Brom because I need matches."

"I just want to build my minutes on the pitch and the

training ground because I have only been back a couple of weeks and I need to get a lot better."

"We have been down to 12 or 13 players in the last few weeks."

■ **ALAN PARDEW** is ready to hand Roy Carroll the chance to prove Sir Alex Ferguson was wrong to show him the door at Manchester United.

The Northern Ireland international, who arrived at Upton Park on a free in the summer, will return from a knee injury to face the Red Devils at Upton Park on Sunday.

He will replace stand-in stopper Shaka Hislop, who Pardeew admits has been impressive.

Becks to put England first

DAVID BECKHAM says he will NEVER quit England to prolong his club career.

Beckham has been told years of twisting his back muscles to take free-kicks have taken their toll and rest may be the only solution.

The problem flared-up again in Real Madrid's Champions League game against Lyon this week but the England skipper won't copy Alan Shearer, who retired early from international football to help him overcome his injuries.

Beckham said: "I never

■ by PETE JENSON

want to quit playing for England. For me it is one of the biggest honours, especially being captain.

"I will never want to retire up until the point a manager comes and says to me 'You are not in my plans'.

"That is when I will look at it." Beckham has also warned his team-mates that they must start performing on the pitch.

He said: "If we don't work hard and run then we are not going to win anything this season."



CHAMPIONS LEAGUE: Hernan let-off

ALL FRIENDS: Joe Cole and Hernan Crespo celebrate Carvalho's goal at Anderlecht



GROUP G

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool.....	5	3	2	0	6	1	11
Chelsea.....	5	3	1	1	7	1	10
Real Betis.....	5	2	1	2	3	6	7
Anderlecht.....	5	0	0	5	0	8	0

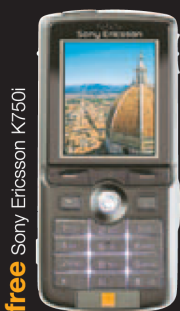
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CRESPO IS A TOP GEEZER

JOE COLE admits Chelsea's England players have let Hernan Crespo off the hook for calling them "fags" and "whores".

■ by DANNY FULLBROOK

The striker and his Argentina team-mates chanted the abuse about England before their clash in Geneva nearly two weeks ago.

Cole, John Terry and Frank Lampard had the last laugh with a 3-2 win but they have refrained from taunting Crespo in case the countries meet again at next year's World Cup.

Cole said: "He has been the same as normal since the England game. It was just a sing-song, wasn't it?"

Pressure

"The singing thing was a lot of fuss about nothing.

"He's a great geezer, an excellent player and we are happy to have him at Chelsea. The England boys have not really given him any grief.

"We don't want to say anything because we might have to play Argentina again in the World Cup."

Crespo's third goal in four games against Anderlecht has helped the Blues clinch their place in the last 16 of the Champions League.

And Cole said: "We have got two world-class strikers. Crespo showed that in Brussels, particularly with his finish."

It was only a month ago that

Crespo's Chelsea future was in real doubt. Speculation was rife that he was about to be dumped by Jose Mourinho after refusing to travel to Sevilla for the Real Betis game to sit on the bench, despite Didier Drogha being injured.

He was then left out of the squad for the defeat by Manchester United but played and scored for Argentina against England a week later.

Despite their differences, Mourinho has shown faith in the 29-year-old with two consecutive starts against Newcastle and Anderlecht.

The Chelsea boss knows he will need Crespo in the New Year when Drogha goes away for five weeks to play in the African Nations Cup.

Cole added: "You just know that when he plays he will score goals and I cannot speak highly enough of him."

Crespo himself was delighted to score and now wants to beat Liverpool to top spot in their group.

He said: "It was very important to get to the last match without any pressure to qualify and we are happy we have done."

"I am playing in a great team and know sometimes I will be on the bench and sometimes I will play. When I play I do my best."

"I am sure we will try to beat Liverpool and then wait to see who we can play."

OK for Kanu

by DAVE ARMITAGE

KANU has convinced boss Bryan Robson he can be a key man in West Brom's scrap for survival.

Robbo was ready to show the former Arsenal ace the exit door because he did not think he had the mindset for the fight.

But Nigerian Kanu, 29, has proved Robson wrong. Robson said: "His mentality has now hardened to what he knows we need at this club."

"He's played for Inter Milan and Arsenal and I got the impression Kanu didn't enjoy getting beaten most weeks when he was used to winning."

"This season he knew it would be a tough challenge again and he's responded."

Although people may think he's laid back, I can assure them Kanu is an absolute winner and does not want to be defeated."

Reid the riot act

by NEIL JOHNSTON

STEVEN REID last night warned Arsenal that inform Blackburn have their sights fixed on Europe.

Mark Hughes' outfit have pocketed 13 points out of 21 to raise hopes of snatching a UEFA Cup spot.

And Reid, 24, said: "The way we are playing at the moment, why not?"

"We are not going to get carried away but if you look at Chelsea, they are running away with it."

"The rest are all capable of beating each other so you don't know where a few wins might take you."

"We are going into games expecting to win and a that is down to the manager. He had a winning mentality in his career and I think he's instilled that into us."

Hughes will be without David Bentley at Highbury as the loan-signing can't play against his parent club.

Bruce's backed

by DAVE ARMITAGE

DAVID DUNN has told Birmingham's snipers to shut up and get off manager Steve Bruce's back.

The £5.5m midfield ace is fed up with the critics calling for Bruce's head after the club's dismal start to the season.

Dunn said: "I hear the things people have been saying and I've read some of the letters in the local paper and to be honest it's b*****ks."

"Perhaps I shouldn't get involved but I'm prepared to stand by my opinion. It is ridiculous that the manager is under pressure."

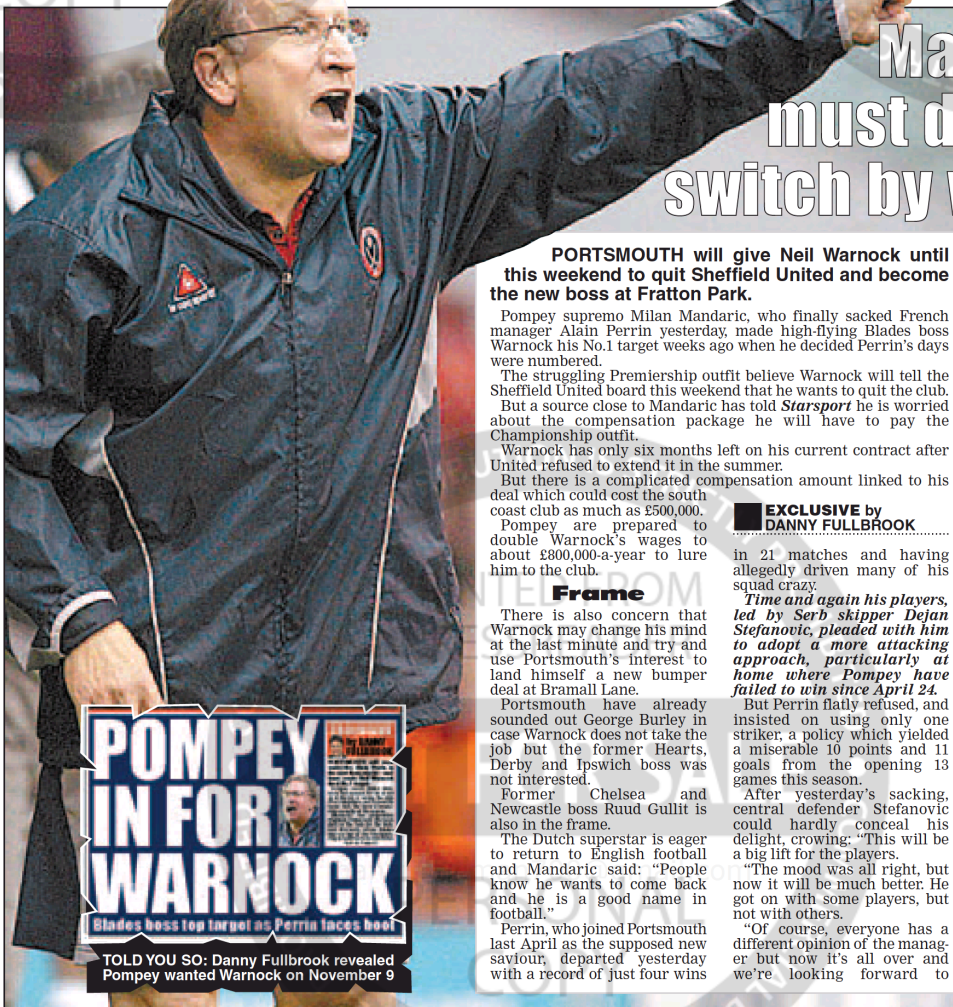
"He got the club promotion after so many years and he took Birmingham to their highest league position in 31 years."

"People tend to forget that and that he has the sort of personality to attract big players."

SERIOUSLY football

Perrin finally given the boot by Milan

POMPEY WAIT ON WARNOCK



Main target must decide on switch by weekend

PORTSMOUTH will give Neil Warnock until this weekend to quit Sheffield United and become the new boss at Fratton Park.

Pompey supremo Milan Mandaric, who finally sacked French manager Alain Perrin yesterday, made high-flying Blades boss Warnock his No.1 target weeks ago when he decided Perrin's days were numbered.

The struggling Premiership outfit believe Warnock will tell the Sheffield United board this weekend that he wants to quit the club. But a source close to Mandaric has told *Starsport* he is worried about the compensation package he will have to pay the Championship outfit.

Warnock has only six months left on his current contract after United refused to extend it in the summer.

But there is a complicated compensation amount linked to his deal which could cost the south coast club as much as £500,000.

Pompey are prepared to double Warnock's wages to about £900,000-a-year to lure him to the club.

Frame

There is also concern that Warnock may change his mind at the last minute and try and use Portsmouth's interest to land himself a new bumper deal at Bramall Lane.

Portsmouth have already sounded out George Burley in case Warnock does not take the job but the former Hearts, Derby and Ipswich boss was not interested.

Former Chelsea and Newcastle boss Ruud Gullit is also in the frame.

The Dutch superstar is eager to return to English football and Mandaric said: "People know he wants to come back and he is a good name in football."

Perrin, who joined Portsmouth last April as the supposed new saviour, departed yesterday with a record of just four wins

EXCLUSIVE by DANNY FULLBROOK

in 21 matches and having allegedly driven many of his squad crazy.

Time and again his players, led by Serb skipper Dejan Stefanovic, pleaded with him to adopt a more attacking approach, particularly at home where Pompey have failed to win since April 24.

But Perrin flatly refused, and insisted on using only one striker, a policy which yielded a miserable 10 points and 11 goals from the opening 13 games this season.

After yesterday's sacking, central defender Stefanovic could hardly conceal his delight, crowing: "This will be a big lift for the players."

"The mood was all right, but now it will be much better. He got on with some players, but not with others."

"Of course, everyone has a different opinion of the manager but now it's all over and we're looking forward to



PERRIN: Fired by Mandaric

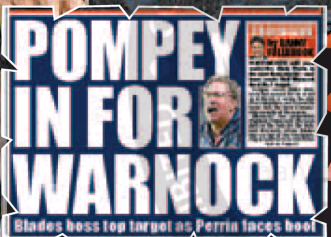
winning some games as soon as possible."

Coach Joe Jordan now takes over as caretaker boss and Stefanovic added: "Joe knows everything about the players here and English football."

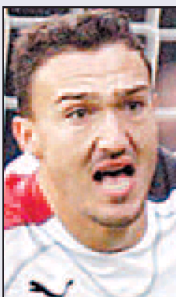
"He will change things that weren't working out before. We will see but, hopefully, we will have two strikers playing against Chelsea this weekend."

"I expect a quick appointment and I want to see a British manager here."

"We have lots of foreign players, now we need more British mentality for the Premiership, someone with fighting spirit."



TOLD YOU SO: Danny Fullbrook revealed Pompey wanted Warnock on November 9



MALBRANQUE: Target

Rafa Branques on Mal

by BILL THORNTON

LIVERPOOL will make a move for Fulham's Steed Malbranque in January and ship Harry Kewell out to Aston Villa.

Rafael Benitez wants Malbranque in the transfer window after losing patience with Kewell.

The Aussie flop looks set to link up with his former Leeds boss David O'Leary, with the Villa manager confident he can get the best out of the player.

French ace Malbranque, 25,

has been a target for several clubs including Manchester City, who agreed a £6m fee with Fulham in the summer before the player decided he didn't want to leave London.

Fulham boss Chris Coleman has since made it clear he doesn't want him to go but Liverpool look set to pose him a problem.

Benitez, with his team

through to the last 16 of the Champions League after their draw with Real Betis on Wednesday, can offer Malbranque the lure of European football.

Convert

And winger Bolo Zenden insists the Reds can convert their superb Euro form to the Premiership.

He said: "We're in a good run of form at the moment and we

want to continue that in the league."

"Trips to Manchester City and Sunderland and a home match with Wigan come before Liverpool's final Champions League game against Chelsea in a clash to determine who will top Group G."

Former Chelsea ace Zenden added: "It will be a nice game. Both teams know they are through and they are going to fight for that top spot."

SERIOUSLY **footbal** SALUTE TO A LEGEND: Star who first put the

The Irish charm of a genius

GEORGE BEST was touched by genius and cut a vividly entertaining figure for a decade in the 60s as a player for Manchester United.

People loved him as both a fantastic player and a bad boy, perhaps because he cocked a snook at life itself as he pursued a lifestyle that was bound to catch up with him in the end.

The boy from Belfast had made an indelible mark on the soccer world by 26, the age when he turned his back on playing serious football to open a nightclub in Manchester that he called Slack Alice.

It was a typical Bestie gesture and a reflection of his life at the time that, as he was always the first to admit, was centred a great deal on birds and booze.

He was in the fast lane all right with a stunning girlfriend, Carolyn Moore – the reigning Miss Great Britain – on his arm when he decided to quit United.

Gifted

The slip of an Irish boy who had become a household star reckoned that he couldn't go on in football any longer.

It was hard to comprehend. Why should such a gifted young man who seemed to have everything want to throw it all away?

But in reflection, while he might have left it young, he started young and played for 11 seasons in the First Division.

If he had got into the first team at 21 and retired 11 years later at 32 nobody would have raised an eyebrow. Best just happened to live his career a little sooner than most!

So when people say that he wasted his career they should remember that by the time he quit Old Trafford he had played 466 league, cup and European games and scored 178 goals.

Best led soccer into the swinging 60s and was football's answer to The Beatles.

Indeed, after an astonishing display in Lisbon in 1966,

when he virtually destroyed Benfica single-handedly, the Portuguese press christened him El Beale.

Manager Matt Busby had ordered his troops to protect their 3-2 first-leg lead and play safely but, with Best sparkling – scoring twice in the opening six minutes – they won 5-1, and their prized star became world famous.

A bemused Busby beamed: "When we made our plans, George must have had cotton wool stuffed in his ears!"

Two years later, United won the European Cup against Benfica at Wembley.

Normal time ended with the game at 1-1 and it wasn't looking good for Busby's boys. But once again, Best produced the inspired touch.

A minute into extra-time he took the ball in a wide curve round the goalkeeper to clip it into an empty net.

Benfica were broken and lost 4-1 as Busby fulfilled his dream just 10 years after the Munich air crash – and he knew just how much it was due to George Best.

DAVID MEEK witnessed George Best's great footballing moments as Manchester United correspondent of the city's evening paper. Here's his recollection of those fabulous days



PAIR OF ACES: Bestie and teammate Denis Law (left) in their Manchester United heyday

SIX OF THE BEST: George hits one of his six goals against Northampton in an FA Cup fifth-round clash in February, 1970. United won 8-2.

SPORT 24
YOUR FOOTBALL WORLD

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glitz and glamour into the beautiful game

We were all left chasing Bestie

THE amazing thing about George Best is everything you have read, heard or will hear about him is true. Completely and controversially true.

The brilliance, booze, birds and, in the end, the self-destruct button he pushed are all part of this story of a wayward genius.

I was lucky enough to watch him, meet him, drink with him and, yes, try and persuade him that he didn't really need another bottle.

But he did. He always did. Best will not receive a lot of sympathy for letting go of his last chance in life although for so many he will remain 'Good Old George'.

The boys at Chelsea Fire Brigade were so used to picking him up from the gutter he had a permanent camp bed inside their King's Road Station. Many times he awoke there the next morning, dusted himself down and went back to his favourite London watering hole.

Catch

Nothing to be proud of, you will say, and of course you are right, but we are not talking about normality here. We are talking about a boy from Belfast born with a gift in his feet that no other from Britain had been blessed with.

A boy thrown into the 60s as football's first Beatle. A footballer so many of us in journalism chased and failed to catch, like a stream of top defenders across the world.

So there we were, out-



BRIAN WOOLNOUGH tells of the days when he tried to keep up with a football genius

side a house in London in the early 70s.

Hundreds of us, peering upwards, knocking on the door, shouting his name and taking it in turns to see if Best was inside.

It was the morning after the night before at Stamford Bridge when Best had been sent off and Manchester United's 10 men won the game.

A night when former Chelsea manager Dave Sexton had transfer-listed Peter Osgood for not trying. Yes, quite a night.

And Best had gone missing. United didn't know where he was. He had left Stamford Bridge and disappeared into the night.

Alleged sightings were constant the next day and we ended up at a mystery address in west London. It was one of my first big door-stepping jobs, waiting. I have lost count of the number of hours I waited for Best.

He finally emerged around five o'clock, unshaven, smiling, long hair and with, of course, a stunning girl on his arm.

Who is she George? Do the club know you're here? What about the sending

off? He probably didn't know her name. Why should he? This was an era in football that belonged to one of its greatest talents.

But it is a tragic story. The first British superstar and the first footballer unable to cope with fame.

Crowds swarming to see him, girls screaming at football matches as if it was a pop concert.

Scared

He was the first who needed a bodyguard.

There was Puskas, there was Pele...then there was George Best.

In an era when defenders were still allowed to kick lumps out of forwards, he danced around them as if they were not there.

Who will ever forget the image of him falling into the arms of the late Sir Matt Busby after United had won the European Cup Final?

Who will ever forget him shining like a diamond at the Stadium of Light against Benfica?

Who will ever forget the story of him in bed with Miss World, surrounded by bank notes and champagne bottles and the hotel



waiter, bringing more bubbly, asking him politely 'George, where did it all go wrong?' A true story.

We hope his drinking and self-destruct will be a lesson to today's players with not half his ability.

George did the same 40 years ago but then he drank it all.

Like the time he was paid handsomely to attend a dinner in London on the one condition he was sober.

The organiser met him, chauffeured him, walked with him but couldn't prevent George getting p****d and abusing a shocked

THE BEST BY A LONG WAY: George wheels away in delight after putting United 2-1 up in extra time against Benfica in the 1968 European Cup Final and (inset) with the trophy

Life 'n crimes of idol

Born: 22 May 1946, Belfast.

1962 - Signed by Manchester United's legendary manager Matt Busby as a 16-year-old.

1963 - Makes his first-team debut for United against West Brom.

1964 - Makes his Northern Ireland debut before the age of 18 against Wales.

1965 - Wins the First Division championship with United.

1967 - Lifts the title for a second time.

1968 - Scores a superb solo goal as United claim the European Cup with a 4-1 victory over Benfica.

1968 - Named Football Writers' Footballer of the Year and European Footballer of the Year.

1970 - Sent off while playing for Northern Ireland for throwing mud at the referee.

1974 - After a series of fail-outs with manager Tommy Docherty, Best announces his retirement as he quits United.

1975 - Returns to English football as he joins Stockport.

1976 - Enjoys a season with Fulham.

1977 - Plays the last of his 37 games for Northern Ireland.

1978 - Marries first wife Angie in Las Vegas.

1979 - Moves to Scotland to join Hibs.

1981 - Becomes father of son Calum.

1982 - Plays for Golden Bay in America after previous spells with LA Aztecs, San Jose Earthquakes and Fort Lauderdale Strikers.

1983 - Last-ever game in British football for Bournemouth.

1984 - Two months in jail for drink-driving.

Divorces wife Angie.

1988 - Facing bankruptcy, friends organise a Testimonial in Belfast which attracts 20,000 fans and raises £75,000.

1990 - An apparently drunken appearance on the Wogan chat-show attracts a storm of protest from viewers.

1995 - Marries air-hostess Alex Pursey, 23.

1998 - Joins Sky Sports as a pundit.

1998 - Forced out of his Chelsea home after allegations of £70,000 mortgage arrears.

2000 - Diagnosed with severe liver damage after years of alcohol abuse.

2001 - Has anti-alcohol pellets in his stomach.

2002 - Given a liver transplant.

2003 - Sells his European Footballer of the Year award at auction for £150,000.

2003 - Newspaper reports allege drinking binges and affairs.

2004 - Banned for 20 months after admitting a drink-drive charge.

2004 - Divorced on grounds of adultery.

2005 - Totally cleared after allegations of indecently assaulting a teenage girl.

2005 - Admitted to hospital for the final time.

DAILY STAR SERIOUSLY football

Warnock gets Pompey D-Day **PAGE 77**

Crespo's joy at Chelsea let-off **PAGE 76**

Brothers in arms **PAGE 75**

Genius George in final 24 hours says doc

SIMPLY THE BEST



DAILY STAR Tribute to a legend

THE Daily Star today pays tribute to the greatest footballer Britain has produced.

We salute the star who lit up the world as a player, but who yesterday lunchtime was given just 24 hours to live.

The news of his deteriorating condition was broken by his specialist, Professor Roger Williams, who revealed Best's death was imminent.

Emotional

In typical fashion, the Irishman's final few hours were played out in the full glare of the public spotlight.

It was how he lived all his adult life.

And it is that life we remember – a dazzling genius who was the game's first superstar, and who Brazilian ace Pele described as the greatest natural talent ever to

by **HOWARD WHEATCROFT**
Sports Editor

grace a football pitch. Prof Williams gave an emotional news conference outside the Cromwell Hospital in West London, where Best was admitted on October 1.

The 59-year-old was unconscious and breathing with the help of a ventilator as his life ebbed away.

An obviously upset Prof Williams said: "I am afraid Mr Best is coming to the end of the long road of his ill-health."

"I can't be precise as to time but it is the final stages of this illness and I am afraid he could die at any time over the next 24 hours."

The ex-Manchester United striker's family, including son Calum, 24, and father Dickie, 87, kept a vigil by his bedside, and former team-mates Sir Bobby Charlton and Denis Law arrived to say their emotional goodbyes.

HE WAS THE GREATEST: Pages 78-79

PURE CLASS:
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Published by Express Newspapers, The Northern & Shell Building, Number 10 Lower Thames Street, London, EC3N 4EN. 0171 434 7010. Dublin: 01 4481 801 802. Printed by West Ferry Printers Ltd, 235 Western Road, London, E4 6BN. Strengthen Printers Ltd, Olives Place, Folkestone, Kent, TN11 9AT. Independent Printing Co. Ltd, 1-2 Upper Haddon Street, Dublin 2, D.C. Thomson Ltd, 144 Port Dundas Road, Glasgow G4 0HZ. South West Wales Publications Limited, Adelaide Street, Swansea, SA1 1DT. Integral Press SA, Middelburg 20, Middelburg, South Africa. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 530 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106, USA. Palms, Mallorca, 07100, Spain. V.M. Group, 11, Grafton Road, Dublin 2, D.C. 01 479 0000. Newsworld, 11, Grafton Road, Dublin 2, D.C. 01 479 0000. Newsworld, 11, Grafton Road, Dublin 2, D.C. 01 479 0000.

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